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THE DUTY AND HAPPINESS OF A PRUDENT
ATTENTION TO THE SICK AND POOR:

A SERMON,

Preached at SOUTHAMPTON, August 17th, 1800,

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE

COUNTY HOSPITAL,

By WILLIAM KINGSBURY, M. A.

*Published at the Request of the Congregation; that the Profits
may be devoted to the Hospital.*

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BY WILLIAM K. MERRILL

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1852

To the GOVERNORS
OF THE
COUNTY HOSPITAL
AT WINCHESTER,

THIS SERMON,

PREACHED AND PUBLISHED FOR THE BENEFIT
OF THAT EXCELLENT INSTITUTION,

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR OBEDIENT SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.



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ADVERTISEMENT.

SHOULD any think the Author chargeable with presumption, in offering to the Public this plain practical Discourse, composed in haste for the occasion, without any thought of its ever again seeing the light;—he has only to say, that the earnest and general request of the hearers, who contributed liberally; and the hope of adding something to the collection, by the advantages of the sale (which will be increased by the Printer's handsomely relinquishing his own profits); have prevailed on him to revise his notes, and to present them in as finished a state, as the space of a few days and his many engagements would permit. Such as it is, he commits the Sermon to the candour of the reader, and to the blessing of God.

W. K.

SOUTHAMPTON,
Aug. 27, 1800.



SERMON.

AT the instance of the Lord Bishop of the Diocess, I have been requested, with some of my Brethren, to co-operate with the Ministers of the Parishes, throughout the County of Hants, in an endeavour to aid the cause of the **COUNTY HOSPITAL**, established at Winchester; a truly charitable and noble Institution; which hath been blessed of God, for the relief and restoration of many thousands of the poor, afflicted with diseases and casualties; who might otherwise have languished long in helpless misery, and many of them, after all their sufferings, been lost to the world.

It appears, however, that the expences of this charity greatly exceed the income, from causes unavoidable, and likely to be of long continuance; that to remedy this misfortune, two things are necessary,—to reduce expence,

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and,

and, if possible, to increase income. For the first purpose, many recommendations must of necessity be discouraged, many deplorable objects be rejected. For the second purpose, among other proposals, it appears to the committee, that a Charity Sermon delivered in every parish throughout the county on an appointed day, and followed by a collection at the doors of the church, would be a desirable means of procuring the alms of the charitable and well-disposed. In consequence of which statements, the Lord Bishop, in a Circular Letter, addressed "to the Reverend the "Clergy of the County of Hants," calls upon them, and earnestly recommends their concurrence with the governors and himself in this measure; by preaching a Sermon, and making a Collection, on Sunday, the seventeenth day of August; and then his Lordship adds: "As this is a work of general humanity, and the benefits furnished to the "poor by this hospital, are supplied without distinction of religion, sect, or party, "it is hoped that ALL will be equally inclined to promote it; and if there are in "your parish any meeting-houses, or chapels, "frequented by persons professing to dissent "from the Church of England, you will do "well to apply to the pastors and principal "persons



"persons composing such congregations; requesting their assistance, by the same means, or any other which they may think more proper, in this good work of common concern."

In cheerful compliance with so liberal a request, I would propose as the theme of our discourse,

PSALM XLI, VER. 1, 2, 3.

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness."

THESE words comprehend the OBJECTS of our attention, the NATURE OF THE REGARD which is to be shown to them, and the BLESSEDNESS of those who compassionately consider and conscientiously relieve them.

The OBJECTS recommended by this part of Holy Scripture, are THE POOR. It may be to our present purpose to observe, that the original word commonly used, to ex-

press simply the case of the poor, as *afflicted* and *depressed*, is not employed in this place; but another term, which conveys the idea of being *exhausted* and *spent*; and is particularly applied to the weak and sickly, who are emaciated by disease; and also to those, whose worldly substance is so *drained*, that they have not the power and means, in themselves, of recruiting and restoring their health and vigour. The objects recommended to your notice, are such as are at the same time visited with both SICKNESS and POVERTY.

But let it not be forgotten, that this is a true description of the *spiritual situation* of every child of Adam,—of every one of us. We are both *diseased* and destitute, “wretched and miserable and poor.”* “There is no health in us,”† “The whole head is sick;” the eye of the understanding is beclouded and darkened; “the whole heart is faint;” the will and the affections, with respect to things spiritual and eternal, are languid and cold, insensible, and even dead; “from the sole “of the foot, even unto the head, there is “no soundness; but wounds, and bruises, and “putrefying sores.”‡ Apt, though awful figures of those poisonous errors, those odious pas-

* Rev. iii. 17.

† Liturgy.

‡ Isaiah i. 5, 6.

sions, those hideous abominations, those destructive crimes, which, generated from the corruption of the heart, break out, visibly, in high and low, in rich and poor; and which spread their infectious influence like a pestilence among us. How many feel the secret throbbings of guilt in their consciences, which they dare not own, and know not how to assuage! But how much greater the number, whose consciences are seared by custom,—whose hearts are hardened by infidelity, or intoxicated and stupified by the spirit of the world. All are insensible, till quickened by divine grace.* Neither have we well-grounded hope or help in ourselves. Our moral strength is exhausted.† We cannot get rid of our guilt, by any atonement we can offer; and we have no disposition humbly to apply to God for assistance;—"tied and bound with the chain of our sins, till the pitifulness of his great mercy loose us."‡ No worldly prescriptions, no earthly physicians, are of any efficacious value, in our desperate case. Not all the wisdom of the wise, not all the suggestions of philosophy and mere human reason, can avail, to assure us how guilt can be pardoned, how blindness of heart§ may be removed, how

* Eph. ii. 1.

† Rom. v. 6.

‡ Liturgy.

§ Eph. iv. 18.

the dominion of reigning vice may be taken away, and how power to perform that which is good may be obtained.* The diseases of the mind are beyond the reach of any thing external. Neither the riches, nor the honours, nor all the pleasures of the world, can effectually relieve, much less heal, a wounded spirit; discharge a heavy-laden soul of its burthen; or satiate, or even slake, the feverish thirst of the heart. But there is a balm in the gospel Gilead; there is a Physician there. || Jesus is the Lord the Healer.† He hath pitied us in our low estate. He hath left his glorious heaven, and come into our world to save sinners; to heal the wounded spirit with the balm of his own blood; to “bind up the broken-hearted,” to cheer the faint, to encourage the despairing, “to satiate the weary soul, and to replenish every sorrowful soul.”‡ Blessed be that Saviour who hath considered the poverty and sickness of wretched and helpless sinners. § Have we felt our misery, and applied for his mercy? Then let us ascribe to him all our praise; and

* Rom. vii. 18. || Jer. viii. 22. † Exod. xv. 26. ‡ Jer. xxxi. 25.

§ The late learned bishop Horne, with many other commentators, applies the psalm from which the text is taken, to the Messiah. Christ himself quotes the ninth verse as a prophecy fulfilled in the treachery of Judas. See John xiii. 18.

learn from his example, and from our experience of his compassion, to commiserate those who still remain in that unhappy state from which we have been delivered.

But the present occasion leads our attention chiefly to those who are afflicted with *bodily maladies*; the odious progeny of the monster Sin. Who can present us with a complete catalogue of human diseases? who can paint them in all their hideous forms? who can describe their intolerable pangs; and their distressing, dreadful, and destructive effects on persons and families? changing beauty into deformity; the freshness of youth, and vigour of health, into ghastly meagreness, and helpless debility; destroying all relish for the enjoyments of life; causing to seek death, though not able to find it, and to desire to die, while death flees from them.* Enter the chambers of the sick. Hear them cry in the morning, "Would God it were even!" and at even, "Would God it were morning!"† Survey the wards of hospitals; take a glance of the unhappy beings there:—Scenes such as the archangel is represented by Milton as showing to Adam:—

* Rev. ix. 6.

† Deut. xxviii. 67.

"A place

" A place

" Before his eyes appear'd, sad, noisome, dark,
 " A lazar-house it seem'd, wherein were laid
 " Numbers of all diseased, all maladies
 " Of ghastly spasm, or racking torture, qualms
 " Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds,
 " Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs,
 " Intestine stone and ulcer, colic pangs,
 " Demoniac phrensy, moping melancholy,
 " And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,
 " Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence,
 " Dropsies, and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums.
 " Dire was the tossing, deep the groans; Despair
 " Tended the sick, busiest from couch to couch;
 " And over them triumphant Death his dart
 " Shook, but delay'd to strike, though oft invoked."

Disgusting, terrifying, as such scenes are, they might not be without their use. It were well for those who deny the fall of man, who make a mock at sin, * to look upon such objects as these. Would not this, if any thing human could, bring conviction home to their hearts, and cause them to exclaim,—“ Worst of evils, what hast thou done?”—Would it not be well for the gay, the trifling, the vain, and especially for the intemperate and vicious, to see, in some of these instances, how soon their

* Prov. xiv. 9.

false and foolish mirth may be exchanged for groans,—their comeliness defaced,—and the effects of their ruinous courses marked by emaciated and reproachful deformity.

Diseases and wounds are very painful, and very disgusting, even amidst all the accommodations of affluence. What then must be the state of those, who are filled and covered with loathsome distempers, and at the same time surrounded and beset with all the miseries of poverty; who lie, coiled up and uneasy, on a “bed shorter than that they can stretch themselves on it,” and where “the covering is narrower than that they can wrap themselves in it:” * who are in want of fuel, nourishment, medicine, wholesome changes, attendance, and every accommodation! Many of you, from your situation in life, can scarce imagine what they behold, whom duty or kindness calls into such scenes as these; what the *sick* and the *poor* suffer, from mingled pain and indigence. Such are the OBJECTS recommended to your attention.

I proceed to the NATURE OF THE REGARD we are to show to the SICK and the POOR.

* Isaiah xxviii. 20.

"Blessed is he that *considereth*," that is, endeavours to understand, enters into, commiserates, and "prudently attendeth to," * their afflicted case. Let me recommend this important Christian duty to you.

It includes *condescending notice*, *patient attention*, and *inquisitive investigation*; in opposition to careless *indifference*, and unfeeling *disregard*. Some are too indolent to be roused, or too delicate to have their enjoyments palled by the sight or sound of human misery; others too busy in their farms or merchandise; some have too many fashionable and pleasurable engagements on their hands, to spare time to attend to the distresses of those around them; others are too elevated to look down upon the mean and the unhappy; and many are contented with receiving the interested or partial reports of others. But surely this sort of inconsideration must be the bane of that lower branch of charity, called humanity. It is quite the reverse of that compassionate attention, which, when in affliction, we wish from our fellow-creatures, and implore of the blessed God. Then, are we not ready to urge that pathetic plea of the Psalmist: "TURN thee unto me, and have mercy upon

* Rendered so by the learned Ainsworth: see his Com. in loc.

"me,

"me, for I am desolate and afflicted: the
 "troubles of my heart are enlarged: LOOK
 "upon my affliction and my pain." * Ah! Sirs, were the glorious Majesty of Heaven to be indifferent to us; were He to be so wholly employed in his celestial concerns, as to disregard our meaner affairs; were He to be so enveloped in the enjoyment of his own happiness,—so absorbed in his own grandeur,—as to refuse his notice and compassion; what should we poor, sinful, perishing mortals do? Instead of this, we read that "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through-
 "out the whole earth;" † as if he were incessantly employed in noticing every object: "that he humbleth himself to behold the things
 "that are in the heaven and the earth; ‡ and "though the Lord be high, yet hath
 "he respect unto the lowly." §

Tender *commiseration*, and the warm emotions of *generosity*, are implied in the *consideration* recommended in the text. Many neglect the afflicted, through that sordid avarice which freezes up the heart. Afraid of hearing or seeing cases of human misery, they are ready to kindle in-

* Ps. xxv. 16—18.

† II. Chron. xvi. 9.

‡ Ps. cxliii. 6.

§ Ps. cxxxviii. 6.

to anger, when urged to compassion; have recourse to every mean and pitiful subterfuge, to hide a temper themselves are ashamed to look at; and form every excuse for keeping their hearts and purses closed. Should there be any such here, I will lead him to a solemn inquiry. Let him put it to his own conscience. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, HOW DWELLETH THE LOVE OF GOD IN HIM?" * Whatever be his profession of religion, doth the love of God dwell in his heart *at all*? Or if it doth, how coldly does the celestial inhabitant lodge,—how feeble is its influence!

The *consideration* here intended, should be *liberal* and *extensive*. In the exercise of charity, we should resemble the sun, or rather its great Author, who diffuses the rays of his goodness all around. Immediate connexions, personal deservings, partial attachments, and party distinctions, are not to prevail in this business. The creature in misery, is a FELLOW-MAN. He is sick, or wounded. His necessity calls for my relief. Shall I first of all ask whether he

* I. John iii. 17.

is a Jew or a Samaritan,—whether he can pronounce my Shipboleth or not? No. His distress entitles him to my assistance; though he differ in his creed, or in his mode of religion. The work we are upon this day, is, in the language of the Circular Letter, “a work of GENERAL HUMANITY: the benefits furnished to the poor by this hospital, are supplied without distinction of religion, sect, or party: it is a good work of common concern.”

Our beneficent Master has taught us this great duty of diffusive charity: replying to the crafty question, “Who is my neighbour?” “A certain MAN,” probably a Jew, “fell among thieves; which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side: and likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came,” and even “looked on him;” but not knowing the stranger, feeling no particular interest in him, “passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan,” one of another nation, of a different party in religion, between whom and the Jews there was no friendly intercourse, *

* John iv. 9.

and

and sometimes bitter enmity, * “as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him.” † The language of this affecting narrative is,—“Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.” ‡

Our regards to the poor and the sick, should be *active* and *efficient*, *prompt* and *speedy*. “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,” or if diseased, “and one of you say,—Depart in peace, be ye warmed, and be ye filled,” and be ye healed, “notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body,—what doth it profit?” § See the good Samaritan. “He went to” the wounded, gasping, and helpless traveller; “he bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine; and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him; and on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence, || and gave it to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest

* Luke ix. 51—54.

† Luke x. 30—33.

‡ I. Peter iii. 8.

§ James ii. 15, 16.

|| Almost eight times as much as the sum of the same denomination among us.

“more,

“ more, when I come again, I will repay thee.”

Here were no empty professions of kindness, no hesitation, no dangerous delay, no sparing of himself, no grudging of attention, time, or personal ease. What he had, he gave ;—his money, his skill, his kind and watchful care during the night, and his prudential charge to the host, and engagement with him, when necessity called him away. Let us go and do likewise, as we have power and opportunity. It is impossible to lay down particular rules respecting this important duty, adapted to every situation. But it is highly desirable, that the sick and the poor should be *personally visited*. Thus we may learn their true situation, and the nature of the assistance they need. If poor ourselves, yet favoured with health, we may afford them tendance and personal help ; to sooth their anguish, and give them some measure of comfort and rest ; and though we have little pecuniary aid to bestow, we may make known their case to those who have more. Has Providence intrusted us with affluence, how can a portion of it be better employed, than for their relief, administered under our own eye and direction ? The benefit also derived from the prudent caution and counsel of judicious
visi-

visitants in a sick chamber, are sometimes not small to the patients themselves, and to their families and attendants. Are you favoured with religious knowledge and experience, in your converse with the afflicted, suggest a word of instruction, advice, or comfort, as their character or case may need. Endeavour to enlighten the ignorant mind, to awaken the sleeping conscience, to recommend a compassionate Saviour to the distressed and wounded in spirit. Remind afflicted believers of the inexpressibly keen agonies endured by their suffering Redeemer, when he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; * when instead of resting on his bed, he was racked on a cross; instead of being soothed by sympathizing friends, his pains were mocked by cruel enemies; instead of a pleasant, refreshing draught, in his exquisite thirst, they gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall. Call up to their remembrance *his patience* and resignation. Tell them how meekly he died, and that he is alive again, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. † Help them to recollect the gracious promises of the support and consolations of his Spirit; and that, when they are absent from the body, they

* Isaiah liii. 5.

† Hebrews iv. 15.

shall be present with the Lord. * Join also with them in prayer, and call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over them. †

Does prudence forbid personal visits? you may employ some suitable and confidential persons to be your representatives. Send to them a pious minister, a skilful physician, a careful nurse, or a faithful friend. You may also provide medicine or nourishment, raiment or other covering; and with all, and after all, recommend them to the care and blessing of God, in your prayers.

People are frequently so situated and employed, as to have little opportunity and power, *individually*, to help the sick and poor. But, then, much good may be done by co-operation. Hence *clubs* and *friendly societies*, composed of artificers, and poorer tradesmen, by their little weekly subscriptions while in health, have raised considerable funds, for the relief of those members who became sick and disabled. Hence *dispensaries* have been established in great cities, and more private *associations*, such as those entitled "The Sick Man's Friend," "The Dorcas Society," &c. But, above all, COUNTY and GENERAL HOSPITALS have the first claim upon the notice of the benevolent; because in *them* the sick

* II. Cor. v. 8.

† James v. 14.

and poor are relieved at *much less expence*, than they can be any other way; they have the *inspection* and *advice* of skilful men; they are under proper *discipline* and *regimen*; they enjoy food, medicine, nursing, cleanliness, and quiet, without any cost, and without hindering the labour, and occupying the time, of their poor relations and friends, at home. To recommend the COUNTY HOSPITAL AT WINCHESTER to your consideration, is the principal object of this discourse.

From its first institution in 1736, to July, 1798, there have been discharged *thirty-two thousand, six hundred, and forty-seven patients*; * that is, about *five hundred and twenty-six every year*, on an average; by far the greater part of whom have been cured. Were it possible for you to see the persons who have been cured, even in one year, collected together, what an assemblage would they form! Could you hear the grateful among them thanking God, and imploring blessings on their benefactors, would it not make your hearts exult with pleasure? Behold many, above *five hundred*, lately emaciated with pining sickness, or disabled by casualties, now in full health and strength, restored to their families, returned to their usual

* See the State of the County Hospital, with the sixty-second Public Report, &c, from July 4, 1798, to July 3, 1799.

labour,

labour, again providing for their offspring, and adding their share to the general welfare of society ! How great then has been the benefit, public as well as private, accruing from this charity, during the long course of more than half a century ! And shall such an institution be suffered to decline ? It is painful to hear that it does, in any degree ; and to observe that, in the course of the year commencing in July, 1798, there was a diminution of at least *one hundred* cured, from the average of former years. And shall this diminution continue ? Shall many poor creatures, who might be relieved, be permitted to languish in poverty and in pain,—their families become burthensome,—through the want of a little joint exertion of the opulent ? Forbid it honour ! forbid it humanity ! forbid it policy and religion ! As for you, my brethren, I know your willingness. But our numbers and ability are comparatively small : yet the conjunction of the slender streams of *our* charity, and that of our neighbouring congregations, may contribute somewhat to the more copious river of general bounty. I need not remind you, that this is a matter of *common concern*. Look at the example of the blessed Saviour ; who, while he laboured in extending the gospel of the kingdom, healed all manner of sickness and disease among the people : thus teaching us attention and con-

sideration to the bodies as well as the souls of men.

Finally, attend to the BLESSEDNESS of those who conscientiously and compassionately consider the sick and the poor. The Hebrew word is plural ; implying the *number* and *variety* of these blessings ; and is frequently used with an exclamation, importing their *value* and *continuance*.

Here, however, it is necessary to distinguish between true benevolence and its counterfeits. The *effect* of beneficence, so far as it relates to our fellow-creatures, will be much the same, by whatever motives actuated. But "THE LORD seeth not as man seeth ; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but THE LORD looketh on the HEART." * The indulged aim, the great end kept in view, by which the mind is prevalently governed, is that which determines the *true nature* of an action, in the presence of the Lord, who weigheth the spirits. † All is not charity that passeth by that lovely name, "Though I bestow all my goods to feed (or to heal) the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth *me* nothing." ‡

* I. Sam. xvi. 7. † Prov. xvi. 2. ‡ I. Cor. xiii. 3.

To apply these observations to the business before us. If a man subscribe to the relief of others, from a *merely selfish* motive, because himself may hereafter be in want, hath he not his reward, in his present *hope*, or, if he stand in need, in the future relief he may obtain? Doth a person contribute to the assistance of the sick, under the idea of *meriting* any thing of God, or *purchasing* his forfeited favour, or *compensating* for guilt contracted, or *procuring a licence* to persevere in iniquity, no portion of the blessedness spoken of in the text is his. Abbeys and hospitals have been erected and endowed heretofore, as a sort of *composition* with Heaven, for the crimes of their founders. And though the age of superstition is gone, yet is it not to be feared, that too many imagine, *even now*, by sacrificing a small portion of ill-gotten riches, they may somehow atone for their vices, or procure an indulgence for continuing in sin? But the hopes of such *charity as this*, so far as respects the givers of it, are built upon loose and sinking sand, which will fail them in the day of trial. Such motives are *absurd*; for how can a little portion of this world's good be of avail, to purchase, or deserve, any thing at his hands, who is the Great Proprietor of the Universe; to whom we can only present what was before his own. Such motives are *abominable*; for they represent *his* favour, which

is

is "better than life," as if procurable by a *bribe*: they undermine the merit of the Redeemer, and attempt to make void the law of the holy and righteous Judge. * Again, if *ostentation* be the governing principle, it will corrupt and spoil all acts of charity, in the view of a holy God, and render them unacceptable to him. "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men: verily I say unto you, They have their reward." †

But that alone is genuine and acceptable beneficence, which arises from unaffected compassion to the wretched; from a deep sense of obligation to the "kindness and PHILANTHROPY of God our Saviour;" ‡ and from a prin-

* It is astonishing, that men of sense and learning, and who cannot be unacquainted with the Holy Scriptures, should so distort I. Peter iv. 8.—"*Charity shall cover the multitude of sins;*" as if it intended, that beneficence to men would blot out our crimes from the sight of a holy and righteous God: whereas, the obvious sense of the passage is, that "*servent charity,*" prevailing "*AMONG OURSELVES,*" instead of *exposing* and *magnifying* each other's faults, would *palliate* and *conceal* them, as far as consistent with reason and justice. See Prov. x. 12; from which this seems to be quoted by the apostle.

† Matt. vi. 1, 2.

‡ Titus iii. 4.

ciple of affectionate obedience to him as our Master and Lord. Thus St. Paul urges the Corinthians "to prove the sincerity of their love," in generous contributions for the poor, by this pathetic argument: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich;" * and he speaks of "liberal distribution," as a token of their "professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ." †

Numerous, various, valuable, and permanent, are the blessings attached to those who are possessed of, and manifest, such a generous, humble, evangelical charity. Pronounced by Christ to be truly happy ("Blessed are the merciful") they *must* be so.—There is a present *heart-felt reward* in doing good. "It is better to give than to receive."—It makes us, in a degree, *partakers of the felicity of the blessed God*; who rejoiceth over his people to do them good. ‡—It is a *comforting evidence* of that faith which worketh by love, and which without works is dead, being alone; § and of our keeping this commandment, "That

* II. Cor. viii. 8, 9.

† II. Cor. ix. 13.

‡ Jer. xxxii. 41.

§ James ii. 17.

" he

“ he who loveth God, love his brother also.” *

—It is *acceptable to God* :—“ To do good and to communicate, forget not ; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” † Add to all this, the *exquisite delight* of the benevolent heart, at seeing or hearing of health and vigour restored to the diseased and disabled !

Beside the *general* present happiness annexed to doing good, some *special* benefits are promised in the text, to him who considers the poor. “ The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble ; the Lord will preserve him and keep him alive ; and he shall be blessed upon the earth.” “ Godliness,” with all its fruits, “ is profitable unto all things ; having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” ‡ The tranquillity of mind, which is the offspring of evangelical beneficence, must, in the nature of things, tend much to the preservation of health. —As disease and death have been inflicted by the hand of a righteous God, on the professors of religion, for *despising the poor*, among other offences (as was awfully exemplified in the church at Corinth §) may we not, on the same principle of retribution, argue, that the

* I. John iv. 21.

† Heb. xiii. 16.

‡ I. Tim. iv. 8.

§ See I. Cor. xi. 20, to the end.

truly

truly pious and benevolent are sometimes shielded from the "pestilence that walketh
"in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth
"at noon day;" and are favoured with long
life, for the advancement of God's glory, and
the benefit of mankind? * It behoves us to
speak with great modesty and caution on spe-
cific judgments and mercies, inflicted or be-
stowed, as the rewards of justice or grace, on
particular vices or virtues; but we have seen
and heard, and our fathers have told us, of
very remarkable instances of this kind.†

But the most excellent and useful, they
who are "the salt of the earth, and the light
"of the world,"‡ who diffuse blessings on all
around them, are not exempted from the gene-
ral lot of sinful mortals. Hear the devout
David cry to his God,—“O Lord, rebuke me
“not in thy wrath, neither chasten me in thy
“hot displeasure. For thy arrows stick fast in me,
“and thy hand presseth me fore: there is no

* See Psalm xci. throughout.

† Benevolent persons, who have gone to administer relief to
their fellow-mortals, afflicted with the most infectious diseases, in
prisons, hospitals, lazarettos, as well as in private houses; as nurses,
physicians, ministers, and friends; have been wonderfully protected
from infection. Many instances of this occurred in the great
plague in England, 1665.

‡ Matt. v. 13, 14.

E

“found-

“foundness in my flesh, because of thine
 “anger; neither is there any rest in my bones,
 “because of my sin.” * Behold the upright
 Job, who had been “eyes to the blind, feet to
 “the lame, and a father to the poor; and
 “who searched out the cause which he knew
 “not, when he was at ease,—broken asun-
 “der, and shaken to pieces!” How mourn-
 fully doth he complain,—“I am made to
 “possess months of vanity; and wearisome
 “nights are appointed to me: when I lie
 “down, I say, When shall I arise, and the
 “night be gone? and I am full of tossings
 “to and fro, unto the dawning of the day.” ||
 Shall I lead you, as it were, to the couch
 of the pious, zealous Hezekiah, that great
 benefactor to all Judah? There he lies in pi-
 ning sickness, mourning like a dove, and
 pouring out his heart before the Lord. †
 Lazarus, the friend of Jesus, was sick; ‡ Epa-
 phroditus, the zealous and beloved fellow-labourer
 of the apostle Paul, was nigh unto death. §
 And thus the zealous minister, the able and
 kind physician, the useful, benevolent, inde-
 fatigable attendant on the poor, when their
 hour was come, have been laid on the bed of

* Pl. xxxviii. 1—3.

|| Job xxix. 15, and xvi. 12, and vii. 3, 4.

† Isaiah xxxviii. 12, 14.

‡ John xi. 1.

§ Phil. ii. 27.

languishing. And so, unless suddenly snatched away by death, must we be. Yes: we may soon become helpless as infants, unable to rise from our bed, or to turn ourselves in it. But, then, God has promised to his people, that “as their day is, so their strength shall be.”* “The Lord will strengthen him” who compassionates the poor, “upon his bed of languishing. Thou wilt make, (or turn||) “all his bed in his sickness.” How condescending and expressive an image of a divine Saviour’s pity, care, and aid! He will *visit* his sick servant, wherever he may be, whether in a palace or cottage; whether lying on his soft couch or uneasy pallet. “He will be with him in trouble.”† Like a friend or brother he will watch over him, and sympathize with him. Yea with parental tenderness will his bowels yearn.‡ “In all his affliction, He is afflicted.”§ In his providence the Lord will raise up and dispose kind and suitable persons to attend him; for “the merciful shall obtain mercy.” Thus will He smooth his tiresome bed. He will also *support* and *strengthen* his *soul*, and lay beneath him his own

* Deut. xxxiii. 25.

|| See margin of the Bible.

† Psalm xci. 15.

‡ Psalm ciii. 13. Isaiah lxvi. 13.

§ Isaiah lxiii. 9.

everlasting arms ; * that his “ faith may not fail,” and that “ patience may have her perfect work.” † Thus, while “ they who have fled from God, “ who have assembled themselves for corn and “ wine,” and withheld pity from the poor, “ howl,” with horror, and agony, and unsubdued rebellion of spirit, “ upon their beds,” ‡ his children are enabled to “ rest in the Lord, “ and wait patiently for him ;” § to lie submissive beneath his hand ; and to say,— “ Whatever I suffer, it is my heavenly Father’s will. Here am I. Let him do to me as “ seemeth good unto him.” ||

As another proof of the blessedness spoken of in the text, we may observe the frequent *restoration* of benevolent and useful persons to health, when the world has been threatened with their removal and loss. Thus, in the second verse,—“ The Lord will preserve him, “ and keep him alive ; and he shall be blessed “ upon the earth : and thou wilt not deliver “ him unto the will of his enemies.” How remarkably was this accomplished in the case of king Hezekiah, who was so eminently useful to his country, and to the church of God. “ The Lord recovered him, and made him to

* Deut. xxxiii. 27.

† James. i. 4.

‡ Hosea vii. 13, 14.

§ Psalm xxxvii. 7.

|| II. Sam. xv. 26.

“ live :

“live:—Behold, for peace,” he says, “I had great bitterness; but thou hast in love to my soul (or life), delivered it from the pit of corruption.” * Job, David, Epaphroditus, are other striking instances of the same kind, recorded in the sacred oracles. A sovereign God hath oftentimes heard and graciously answered humble petitions presented to him, to spare valuable and useful lives. “The prayer of faith,” offered with submission, in the name of Jesus, under the direction of the word, and influence of the Spirit, is the appointed, and has been not seldom the honoured, means of “saving the sick; and the Lord has raised him up.” “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” † While it is no little calamity to lie under the curse and abhorrence of the people, for withholding corn, ‡ or any other species of oppression,—it is a privilege of unspeakable value, to have the blessings implored by the pious, however poor, to come upon us. §

But, “when flesh and heart *finally* fail, “*then* God is the strength of his people’s hearts.” || When nature sinks, he is near, to administer the “strong consolations” ¶ of his gra-

* Isaiah xxxviii. 16, 17.

† James v. 15, 16.

‡ Prov. xi. 26, and xxiv. 24.

§ Job xxix. 13.

|| Ps. lxxiii. 26.

¶ Heb. vi. 18.

cious promises. He gives them a hope full of immortality. They exult in the prospect of eternal glory, and sometimes sing aloud on their dying beds. * Much difference may sometimes be observed, between the last hours of the man who honoured the Lord with his substance, and regarded and assisted the afflicted,—and *him* who was penurious, inconsiderate, and unfeeling. The bed of the latter has been sown with thorns; his views have been dark; and tho' his soul may be saved through grace, it is "so as by fire." † While the former, tho' he disdains all trust in what he has done, hath an evidence of grace, whereby "he knows "that he is of the truth, and assures his heart "before God." ‡ "And so an entrance is ministered unto him *abundantly*, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour "Jesus Christ." §

The blessedness promised in the text, doth not *cease with mortal life*, but is, immediately after the dissolution of the body, perfected in deliverance from all trouble, and crowned with the complete felicity of the soul, in a separate state. "The righteous man perisheth," in the account of an unbelieving world, "and no man

* Psalm cxlix. 5.

† I. Cor. iii. 15.

‡ I. John iii. 19.

§ II. Pet. i. 11.

"layeth

“layeth it to heart; and merciful men are
 “taken away, none considering that the right-
 “teous are taken from the evil to come.”
 But “he *shall enter into peace.*” * For, “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” † Absent from this vile body, full of disease and pain, but present with the Lord, ‡ in that state, where “the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick:” where “the wicked cease from troubling, and “the weary are at rest.”

This blessedness shall be *publicly pronounced*, and *fully conferred* on the *whole person*, the raised body again united to the soul, by the GREAT JUDGE of the world, in the presence of an assembled universe, at the last day. Then, while the obstinately penurious, the selfish, the avaricious, the hard-hearted, the despisers and oppressors of the poor and wretched, shall stand abashed and trembling, ready to be condemned and rejected, at the left hand,—“the SON OF MAN,” “seated on the throne of his glory,” shall acknowledge, with smiles of gracious approbation and acceptance, the compassion and benevolence which had been shown by his disciples, in the *smal-*

* Isaiah lvii. 1, 2.

† Rev. xiv. 13.

‡ II. Cor. v. 8.

lest instances, unto his brethren, for his sake : *not* as the *purchase* of his favour, *not* as the *ground* of their *acceptance*, but as the *evidences* and *fruits* of their humble faith, which received and relied upon his sacrifice and righteousness ; and as an open proof of the *sincerity* of their love to him, though sometimes questioned by their own modest fears, and often denied or ridiculed by scoffing men in the present state. " Then shall the King say " unto them on his right hand, Come, ye " blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom " prepared for you from the foundation of the " world : for I was an hungred, and ye gave " me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me " drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me " in ; naked, and ye clothed me ; I WAS " SICK, AND YE VISITED ME ; I was in " prison, and ye came unto me." * O the honour, the joy, the transport, resulting from this *acknowledgment*, this *invitation*, this *benediction*, pronounced by a condescending and smiling Judge ! O the rapture, amid the acclamations of millions, of following him into " life eternal," and being ever with him !

Take then, my brethren, a review of this blessedness ; so great, so various, so valuable

* Matt. xxv. 31, to the end.

and permanent ; to be enjoyed in the body and in the mind, in life and in death, in the separate state, in the awful day of judgment, and throughout all the ages of eternity :—and then seriously ask, whether it is not of the utmost moment for you to have the genuine *root* of all real and acceptable charity in yourselves ;—I mean, a truly lively faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, working by love, bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, and especially that grace (II. Cor. viii. 6) of *considering the poor and the sick*, which has been explained and inculcated this morning. Ye have now a happy opportunity of testifying, at once, your compassion, your unostentatious beneficence, your diffusive liberality, and your enlarged charity, your humble aim to please God, and your ardent desire to be honoured by Christ, your gracious Saviour, at the last day,—by a generous subscription for the aid of the COUNTY HOSPITAL.



